

4

On the Evils of Artificial Methods
of Fecundation and on Abortion
Production in Modern Times.

BY

T. M. DOLAN, M.D., F.R.C.S.,

*Fellow of the Gynecological Society of Great Britain; Fellow of the Obstetrical Society;
Fellow of the Medical Society of London, etc.*

JOHN HEYWOOD,
DEANSGATE AND RIDGEFIELD, MANCHESTER;
AND 11, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,
LONDON.

1888.

ON THE EVILS OF ARTIFICIAL METHODS OF PREVENTING FECUNDATION AND ON ABORTION PRODUCTION IN MODERN TIMES.*

EVER since Hippocrates drew up that oath which amid all the changing centuries stands out to us to-day as binding and as true in its precepts as any law of the Christian dispensation, the medical profession have faithfully fulfilled that part of the injunction relating to the administration of deleterious drugs to women. The oath thus runs:—"I will give no deadly medicine to anyone, if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; nor will I conspire with a woman to destroy her unborn child." . . . What the father of medicine laid down as the moral law in a Pagan age, surely we who live in a century dignified by another name ought more strictly to follow, and in action, and by word carry on the teaching of the school of Hippocrates.

As a profession, I am convinced we discountenance in private the acts included under the title of this paper; but is that enough? There are occasions when to be silent is to connive; and I believe we have now reached a crisis in the history of medicine, a crisis affecting all countries, when it has become necessary for members of the profession to speak out, and declare the faith that is in them. Our rôle of physicians would indeed be limited if it were simply confined to the cure of disease; we aspire to something higher; we aim at making people healthier, consequently happier, and I hope better. Of late years we have gained a new title to respect by our exertions on behalf of State medicine. In the whole

* Paper read at the Ninth International Medical Congress, held at Washington, September, 1887.

domain of State medicine no question can be raised so important as the one affecting the perpetuation of our species ; it is the initial question ; it is a far reaching one. It may be considered in its purely religious aspect, a side upon which I need say very little, because so much has been written on this side, and so well, by the teachers of Christianity, that I could not add anything new. Moreover, I could not hope to convince any who deny teaching which rests on faith. Those who believe, require no arguments to confirm them in their acceptance of the dogmatic laws laid down by the Christian Churches on the sanctity of marriage, on the ends for which marriage was instituted, and on the sin incurred by the practice of preventive checks. I leave this side to the ministers of religion, and shall confine myself to what I deem the medical aspects, in the hope of eliciting opinions from others on these practices. I unreservedly accept the proposition laid down by the doctors of the universal Church :—*Peccant conjuges si in usu matrimonii vel post usum, aliquid faciant quo impediatur generatio, vel quo semen receptum rejiciatur, quia agunt contra finem matrimonii.*

What are the practices to which I allude ? Of late years we have been confronted by a revival of some of the doctrines of Malthus, though not expressed with the same refinement or ability with which Malthus introduced his views. One word on Malthus. Malthus' law may be formulated as follows :—

Population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increasing in geometrical ratio, whilst the means of subsistence, under circumstances most favourable to human industry, cannot be made possibly to increase faster than in arithmetical ratio. This law rests on assumptions. (1) It presupposes that generative power will be equal in all. (2) It leaves out the increasing industry of man, and his inventions ; it forgets the powers brought to man's aid—the steam engine enables man to multiply his production tenfold. (3) The stern logic of facts opposes the

law. In France wealth increases and population decreases, reminding us of the warning of Goldsmith:

Ill fares the land—to hastening ills a prey—
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

In England population increases and wealth also increases, so that the law of Malthus might almost be reversed. Malthus made another general statement: "Population invariably increases when the means of subsistence increase, unless prevented by powerful and obvious checks. These checks, and the checks which keep the population down to the level of the means of subsistence, are moral restraint, vice, and misery." The history of Ireland negatives this statement—the means of subsistence have been of the most limited kind, so much so that we might venture to formulate a revival law, that poverty and increase of population went together. The word subsistence admits of different interpretations. The laws of Malthus will not stand examination. The neo-Malthusians have thrown overboard some of Malthus' recommendations. They have struck out a programme of their own. Education by the press is now recognised, and the neo-Malthusians have brought to their aid the printing-press, and commenced an active propaganda. We have had a flood of this kind of literature scattered amidst our English-speaking populations, openly teaching how fecundation may be prevented; and worse still, means are provided, in the shape of medicated tampons, syringes, and sheaths, by means of which it may be arrested. This is the first evil we have to meet openly. I may briefly here allude to the justification for these procedures.

Those who support this creed, in place of the natural law to which they appeal in other parts of their programme, accept as a basis the artificial legislation of civilised countries, which makes the struggle for existence so keen as to interfere with the provision for the inhabitants of those countries. "Large families," they say, "are injurious to a nation; diminish the number, and there will be room enough for all." If we admit

such a doctrine, why not resort to more thorough measures, and remove all who do not themselves contribute to their own maintenance, such as the old, the insane, the incurably sick, the blind, the deformed? We shall thus clear the ground effectually. Society would at once revolt against such a proposal. I do not accept the Malthusian doctrine as offered in its modern guise. I hold that the world is, or should be, large enough for all who may be born into it. I maintain this neo-Malthus creed to be a weak excuse to shift the responsibility for the world's ills upon man's imperfect government of this globe of ours. What though progress and poverty go hand in hand, must the blame be laid on large families? Must we not rather probe to the bottom and seek for other causes, in the relation of capital and labour, in the unequal distribution of wealth, in defective land laws, and in other politico-economical parts of our social system? Should not this earth be sufficient to supply the wants of all? Do not the sea and the rivers give us fish in abundance? Are there not fertile lands in every country from which we can draw food supplies? Is there not more wealth than is needed? "Before the worm on the leaf turns on the worm in the dust" (*Dickens*)—before political economists of this school can say population is excessive, only such a number shall be born, families must be kept within a certain limit—they must first answer these questions.

In this republic of yours, one of your citizens, George, has dared to ask these questions. Whatever may be said of his teaching, he does not ask the people to rise to better things by the practice of arts which lower women to the level of prostitutes—nay, even lower than the brutes we deem our inferiors—or induce men to imitate the action of the man whose name has been handed down in connection with a vice which has ever been held as being disgraceful. Historically we have it on evidence that the vice of to-day is simply a copy of what was known in the early days of the world.

We read in Genesis that Onan *semen fundebat in terram, ne liberi fratris nomini nascerentur*. Speaking plainly, we have to deal with Onanism; though we may call it by fashionable names, as preventive checks, control of population, it here stands out in all its hideous nakedness. Those who believe in revelation will accept this history of the punishment of Onan: "and therefore the Lord slew him because he did a detestable thing." Onan's name has lived, and believer and unbeliever have ever associated it with a vice which has only to be mentioned in secret. We have made progress since those days. We dignify Onanism by another name. Those who commend the arrest of fecundation call one of their plans, "the method of retraction:" as here the act is completed *extra vas*, the vice is the same; with greater ingenuity some of the methods are so devised that the act is completed *intra vas*, but who will say that there is any difference in the two acts, save in the methods? Onan's intention is still carried out.

Onanism, I venture to assert, is to be condemned on medical grounds: (1) because it offends against the natural law; (2) because it is detrimental to the interests of society; (3) because it is physiologically injurious.

1. What do I mean by natural law? I may define it as the light of natural reason, by which we distinguish what is right and what is wrong. Now this natural law is one and in itself identical for all mankind; in fact, the different races of mankind, civilised or uncivilised, are guided by the same general principles, I may call them precepts of morality, which spring from the natural law. We are told by Quatrefages, that races far removed from our ideas of civilisation have certain moral characteristics shown by the modesty of their women, by their punishment for adultery, by their marriage customs, etc. Herbert Spencer, in his "Sociology," also gives us instances of the same kind occurring in savage tribes, and he tells us how, in the process of man's evolution, the moral law so far

perfected itself, that in place of indefinite incoherent marital relations we have definite coherent ones. However far back we pursue the subject, we find that natural law has asserted itself, and the sexual instincts, however gratified, by rapture of women, by their purchase, or by consented association, have been so in accordance with the natural customs which rule the whole animal world. Whatever practices we find prevailing among the rudest tribes, say on infanticide, yet we cannot attribute to these tribes the arts which are prevalent to-day in civilised communities, and which would appear to have their growth in civilisation; just as sodomy, fornication, and other forms of sexual crime are condemned by the universal consent of mankind, and are against the natural law, so I maintain that Onanism, *extra* or *intra vas*, is also against the natural law, and should be condemned.

You will, I trust, admit that the question is not one of marriage alone; it is more fundamental, it regards the proper use of sex itself. Reasoning more closely, from the moral side, I say that Onanism is to be condemned because (1) *It is a crime against the law of reason or natural law.* The reason is simple. It is a crime to direct what we use from its intrinsic end. The intrinsic end of copulation is generation, therefore Onanism, which diverts copulation from this end, is a crime. (2) *It is a grievous crime.* Crime is light or grievous according to the matter which it disordinates. The matter disordinated by Onanism, or rather undone by it, is the most important good of the human race—viz., its continuance. It cannot, under any circumstances, lose its guilt. The contract of marriage cannot remove or lessen it; it is indifferent in what way it is performed, because there is always the same element of guilt—viz., the distortion of copulation from its end. The above charges are confirmed and promulgated by revelation, though they do not depend upon it, and can only be questioned by the utter subversion of all morality. If we look at the consequences and signs of

the opposition of Onanism to the natural law we find them in the following: (1) Onanism is contrary to natural instincts, and is only resorted to by calculation; (2) it is against the common voice of mankind.

2. Herbert Spencer tells us that the future of domestic evolution is almost secured. After tracing the progress of the sexual relations through all their phases, he says ("Principles of Sociology," vol. 1, p. 787) "The monogamic form of the sexual relation is manifestly the ultimate form, and any changes to be anticipated, must be in the direction of completion and extension of it. There may, too, be anticipated *a strengthening of that ancillary bond constituted by joint interest in children. In all societies this is an important factor, and has sometimes great effect, even among rude peoples.* Falkner remarks 'that although the Patagonian marriages are at will, yet when once the parties are agreed, and have children, they seldom forsake each other, even in extreme old age.' *And this factor must have become more efficient in proportion as the solicitude for children becomes greater, and more prolonged, as we have seen that it does with progressing civilisation, and must continue to do.*" Herbert Spencer is well known in the States. He has paid a high tribute to American women, and to the way Americans bring up their children, so that what he has to say comes from one favourable to your institutions. If what he says be true, then must the whispers which come across the Atlantic, that preventive checks are the order of the day in America (as well as in other countries), be taken to mean, that you are not advancing on the lines of true civilisation.

I suppose we are all agreed on certain principles of social morality, and that we have some definite ideas on the institution of marriage, that it was intended to put an end to promiscuity, and that one of its chief ends was the conservation of the species.

The conjugal relation is one of choice, and is composed of many elements. It bears a relation to

the individual and to the State. Family life has ever been associated in its greatest perfection with the happy voices of children, and the prolific mother has been ever the type of ideal happiness, because the family makes the State, and because each State wants her citizens. The real wealth of a nation lies not in gold, or in temporal possessions alone, but in the number of well-ordered, well-fed, and contented inhabitants she can support. America is not over-populated when so much land yet lies uncultivated; nor looking at other countries, can I consent to the proposition that they are over-populated. In France the population does not increase as fast as in Germany, or England. The question comes home to her, how far artificial restraints are accountable for this? Looking at the subject from the family side, I say that conjugal Onanism is to be condemned. It prostitutes woman. No doubt woman has the hardest lot, but she does not make her condition better by adding to her already great burden, the burden of sin, and, as I shall presently show, of disease. I am willing to concede to woman all she asks for in the way of social status. If she desires to come down from the high pedestal on which she now stands, and from being the object of man's admiration, and shall I say, too, of his adoration, prefers to enter into the fierce arena of life, and become his competitor, by all means let her. For many women the professions are the most suitable vocations, and I do not dispute woman's capacity in many fields on which she has entered. But woman cannot change her nature as easily as she can change her garb or occupation. Though she may enter on the duties hitherto assigned to man, and though she may do man's work, yet she cannot divorce herself from her higher instincts, and what I may call her highest duties. If she enters on the married state of her own free will, she should accept the responsibilities entailed upon her by her sex, and by her duties to society. Celibacy is open to her if she has an objection to children. Thousands of women are compelled to lead

celibate lives, and do so with purity. Women may say "we were meant for better things than child-bearing. Children hinder us from taking our due part in society, and prevent us from elevating ourselves." This is a strange justification. Is she willing simply to be man's plaything; to minister purely to passions expended licentiously, and in methods which offend against ordinary decency? Is it true she is willing to give up what has ever been in almost every age the crowning glory of woman, that of motherhood, in order to throw herself into the business of life? In the old and decaying civilisations sexual vice was the prelude of their downfall, and though I do not believe we have reached such a degree of degraded voluptuousness as marked the decline of some of the older civilisations, yet I think we have entered on the first stage, and here the axiom of Ovid has force—*Principiis obsta*.

I trust the higher education of women does not consist in learning how to prevent fecundation. Her elevation in the social state should not be purchased by degradation personal to herself. Without woman's help we cannot check these frauds; and unless we can awake the conscience of women, and make them feel that these acts are sinful, hurtful, and that each fraud is an indirect infanticide, we shall not put an end to the evil.

In the old civilisations, in the days of their youth, conjugal love was ever associated with children. Juno tempted Æolus to let loose the pent-up winds on the Trojan ships, by the offer of a beautiful nymph, Deiopea, whom she promised to bind to him in the stable bonds of wedlock, and to call his own, and who would make him the father of beautiful offspring. Virgil spoke for his time.

In a play of Sophocles, called Oedipus the King, the citizens tell of their sufferings in the following words:—

The nurslings of the genial earth
Wane fast away;
The children blighted ere the birth
See not the day;
And the sad mother bows her head. . . .

The physiological aspects may be said by some to concern us more particularly. I need not detain you with a recapitulation of the physiology of the sexual organs in man and woman ; all the parts concerned are most wonderfully structured, no less so in man than in woman. What concerns us most is the nervous supply of these organs, because it is in this part men and women suffer by the artificial checks in vogue. I shall take them in order, and shall first speak of the effect of some artifices on man,

The method of retraction, I find, is very common. I speak from my professional experience of cases, where this practice, followed for years, has been attended by the most injurious consequences. The symptoms in the male may be divided into neuropathic, vascular, and pulmonary, the nervous predominating. We are all familiar with the symptoms in the solitary Onanist ; they are not so accentuated in the conjugal Onanist. We need not be surprised at the presence of neurotic symptoms. Retraction is the most injurious of all the methods to the male. I need not describe in detail what the various plans are, but the one derived from a Doctor Condom, who has achieved a notoriety equal to that of Onan himself, is also injurious to the male ; apart altogether from the pollution it leads to, it interferes with the natural gratification ; it taxes also the nervous system, because the dual action is not suspended, for there is always the fear that Condom may not be impervious.

The injurious effects on the female of the various methods are well recognised. The methods of retraction and of Condom interfere with the sexual act to the greatest extent, as the semen is not distributed over the vas intended for it by nature. There is not completion of the act. This denial brings on a number of well-defined symptoms, which may be divided into neuropathic, vascular, and pulmonary, besides local affections of those organs which are so intimately connected with the sexual act—the uterus and its appen-

dages. I could bring forward numerous cases to bear out these statements, but I abstain for the reason advanced by Dr. Mayer, who has so ably treated this subject. All practitioners must have observed them more or less, and it is sufficient to evoke their recollection to account for our silence. French writers have dealt with this unpleasant subject, and as the French language lends itself better than ours to an explanation of delicate subjects, I quote from a French author why conjugal Onanism should be attended by such general and local affections. Francis Devay says:—"Il ne point difficile de concevoir le degré de perturbation qu'un semblable pratique doit exercer sur le système génital de la femme. En provoquant des désirs qui ne sont point satisfaits, une stimulation profonde retentit dans tout l'appareil; l'utérus, les trompes, et les ovaires entrent dans un état d'orgasme; l'orage n'est point apaisé par la crise naturelle; une surexcitation nerveuse persiste. Il se passe alors ce qui aurait lieu, si, présentant des aliments à un homme affamé, on les retraits brusquement de sa bouche, après avoir ainsi violenté son appétit. La sensibilité de la matrice, tout l'appareil de la reproduction, sont tirillés en sens contraire. C'est à cette cause trop souvent mise en action que l'on doit attribuer ces nevroses multiples, ces bizarres affections, qui ont pour point de départ le système génital de la femme." Dr. Mayer also says: "Il est vrai semblable que l'éjaculation et le contact du sperme avec le col utérin constituent pour la femme la crise de la fonction génitale, en apaisant l'orgasme vénérien, en calmant les convulsions de la volupté, sous lesquelles s'agitait frémissante l'économie toute entière."

It has often been said, "Que l'utérus est la femme." If this be true then we can understand why, in these days, uterine diseases are on the increase. I do not favour the view that all the diseases of the generative tract in women are to be attributed to conjugal frauds: but I cannot, at the same time, shut my eyes to facts, which clearly point to sexual abuse as the cause of many

of the lesions we meet with in the sexual and reproductive organs of women. It is a subject which has yet to be cleared up, and is well worthy of the attention of the profession.

I have said sufficient on this part of the question, and before proceeding to the destructive measures, I may in conclusion say, that the conjugal frauds complained of are practised not by those we term the lower classes, but by those who would like to be included, and who do include themselves, under the title of the higher classes. If education brings about such results, we may expect that the custom will be more universally adopted.

Selfishness is at the root of the evil; men and women are unwilling to put forth too great an effort; they have an ambition to give their children a position equal to their own; in other words the child has to begin where the father left off. This is not good for a child or a country. We are too ambitious, and aim at too much comfort, and comfort is but another name for luxury. *Guyot says, "There are two ways in which this comfort may be gained and preserved; either by redoubling one's efforts, or by reducing one's burdens to a minimum. Most Frenchmen prefer the latter course. We blame the imprudence of the spendthrift who brings children into the world without having the means of maintaining them in it, but the prudence which refuses to undertake the duties of maternity for fear of the burdens which they entail, is a grave symptom of moral inertia. The spring of life and energy is broken in a man who, instead of acting, makes it his aim to avoid action. . . . 'Every child you don't have,' says M. de la Palisse, 'is one man the less,' and that man might have been a Papin, a Watt, a Stephenson. . . . The increase of population forces progress on every people—the exaggerated application of the Malthusian principle threatens little

* "Principles of Social Economy." London, 1884. pp. 134—140.

by little to destroy the French population. If this should extend to other races, which form the front rank of civilisation, they will run the risk of some day being supplanted by less civilised people." With truth I said this question was one of the most important in connection with State medicine. It concerns the individual, the family, society. We, as medical men, with all those interests at stake, cannot any longer be silent, and I believe a good deal rests with us towards checking these evils. Individuals cannot do much, but a united profession can accomplish a good deal. I appeal to the profession, not of one country, but of the world, to let it go forth from this great Congress, that in the interests of the individual, the family, and society, you condemn these conjugal frauds, on the ground of social morality and social economy, in the true interests of the nations you represent.

Abortion production need not detain us very long. It is a crime recognised by all civilised countries; it requires no argument to show why such a practice is immoral and criminal. I use the word abortion in its broadest sense; criminal abortion includes all attempts made, at any time, to destroy the fecundated ovum, the embryo, or the fœtus. A difference has been made between the living and the inanimate fœtus, fixed by the number of days that have passed, and there has been endless discussion as to at what period life was manifest first. As soon as impregnation has taken place, a being is in process of formation, and that being has rights, and those rights must be safeguarded. That is the only logical position we can take. Though the laws of different countries punish those who induce or submit to abortion, and though the medical profession, as a body, support the teaching of Hippocrates, yet we have evidence that abortion production is on the increase in countries which claim to be civilised; in fact, it would appear that we have almost reached the state which distinguished the last days of the Roman empire. This remark applies to America, England,

France, Germany. I make this statement on the authority of such experts in medico-legal studies as Casper and Tardieu. These writers furnish us with statistics on infanticide, which are appalling, but they do not reveal the actual extent of the evil; they only furnish us with the number of cases found out, or the number of autopsies made, or public inquiries held relative to infantile deaths. We are told that in your country the abortionist, male or female, practises the art almost openly, and that it is a very lucrative trade. We are told that some of your women, who are too refined to adopt the other preventive checks, have no hesitation in resorting to practices even more heinous still, and more criminal. We are told it is not the ignorant, but your educated, refined, and fashionable women who are the worst sinners. I hope, for the honour of your American women, this imputation on their fair name will be denied. If it cannot, then may they hang their heads in shame, and stand confessed as Herod's successors. He killed the infants after birth, it is true, but the crime is none the less because committed before birth. As to the prevalence of the fashion in England, we have but too much proof. The opinion of Dr. Braxton Hicks, consulting physician to Guy's Hospital, should satisfy us. "Production of abortion," he says, "is, I regret, rather extensively regarded by the married public as not only venial, but ordinary and proper, if pregnancy should interfere with their arrangements. One is coolly asked to induce abortion for the veriest trifle—because it interferes with the autumn holiday, or the season, because of the disagreeables of pregnancy and labour, for trifling sickness, or because the husband or both do not like children." The instincts of nature, one would think, would guard against this crime. All the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten Lady Macbeth's hands, nor could they the hands of her sisters imbrued in infants' blood. Think of the crime as if performed on the living child, whose prattle amuses and delights

us. Think how one would feel to see it dashed against a wall, or to see some rude instrument pushed into its tender flesh, to see the gaping wounds, and its little life cruelly crushed out. No mother could stand by and see such cruel things done.

What is the difference? Until we can make women see that the crimes are identical, we shall not stop abortion. Women have the key to the position. Abortion procured by married women is even more heinous than when induced by some frenzied girl who wishes to conceal her shame; if any defence could be raised, it might be for the victims of man's passion.

What is the cause of this change of feeling on the subject? Dr. Hicks lays the blame, as I do, on the literature with which we have been flooded. He says: "This tone of mind is the natural outcome of such words and notions as are conveyed in works like 'The Fruits of Philosophy.' But I think I only speak from my own experience, that in many instances it has in a measure undermined the healthy moral tone which was formerly the characteristic of the Englishwoman. At all events, I hold that a considerable amount of the disturbances and diseases of the uterus and its appendages results from the practical application of the modern so-called 'Philosophy.' But surely he must be a very clever philosopher who can, while interfering with the laws of nature, avoid the consequences of the disarrangements by his own contrivance; even if he could avoid bodily injury, he cannot stave off its moral or mental effects."

I need not bring any further evidence as to the existence of this crime in modern times. We all know of it; I call upon the profession to make a united stand against it. We may be the saviours of our country. Our choice lies between two philosophies: on the one hand we have a philosophy which has been called by Sir Isaac Newton "sublime," of which Rousseau said "that if it had been the invention of man the invention would have been greater than that of

the greatest heroes ;" a philosophy which has stood the test of time, and been accepted by the greatest minds of our own and past ages ; a philosophy which teaches us a morality conducive to the best interests of the individual, the family, and society. It is the old revelation to man. On the other hand, we are offered a philosophy which lowers and degrades—of the earth, earthy—and which we know too frequently ends in crime. We are offered for the philosophy of the Scriptures and the Gospels, the newer philosophy of the sponge, the tampon, and the vaginal douche, of which these are the fruits. The choice is before you.

